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Lyam Thomas Christopher

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The Secret of the Grail

What It Is and How to Find It



Is magic real? Do miraculous objects like the Holy Grail really exist? Should we take shamans, witches, and wizards seriously? As a reader of *Forbidden Realms*, you probably suspect that a true understanding of ancient mystical traditions requires the perspective of an insider. An initiate. In other words, you have to *do* magic to understand magic. But how does one become an initiate? How can we shift our understanding from outsider to insider?

If you feel like an outsider, if you are curious about the inner workings of mysticism, if you are tired of the typical modern dismissal of it all—or rather, if you want to know *how* it works instead of *whether* it works—you'll have to enter new territory. You'll have

to shift beyond the modern point of view. In this article, we will undergo that shift together. By the time you're done reading, you will begin to see the world through the eyes of a shaman. Magic will be real.

I recently came across a book that attempts a serious exploration of this topic. Unfortunately, in the first two sentences, the author already gets it wrong:

“Early humans lived lives of fear and uncertainty. With danger at every turn from the powers of nature and wild beasts, these men and women turned to greater powers in an attempt to ease the hardships of their lives.”

Is this how our most ancient traditions of magic came into being? From fear? As sincere as the author appears, his inquiry is immediately distorted by a modern belief. The writer appears to think that our prehistoric ancestors had a worldview that is the same as ours today. He assumes they saw the world as a threatening place filled with indifferent physical laws and “danger at every turn.” Did our ancestors really see it that way?

My answer, of course, is no. And *you* don't have to see it that way either.

Nature, the Monster

The idea that Nature is “out there” beyond the city gates, and that she is “out to get you,” gets drilled into us at an early age as we are indoctrinated into our big-screen-TV lifestyles. Our human civilization takes pride in keeping the discomforts of Nature at bay. It gives us mosquito repellent, hot tubs, and human rights—so we tend to view an urban lifestyle as orderly, soothing, and sane. Nature, on the other hand, can seem quite brutal and unfair, no doubt. She gives us scorching-hot deserts, freezing-cold mountain lakes, tornadoes, and big sharks that bight innocent baby seals in half—so

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use the words wild and crazy together as though these two adjectives are the same.



Nature, the Monster: *The Destruction of Leviathan* by Gustav Doré

Even though we are beginning to realize that civilization's cavalier attitude toward Nature is unrealistic — not to mention unsustainable — our ancient fear of her as a monster is not so easily uprooted.



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From respected scholars, we have learned a harsh, battle-ready vocabulary. Terms like “dog-eat-dog,” “top of the food chain,” and “brutal struggle for survival” roll right off the tongue. Nature is “red in tooth and claw.”

*Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law*

*Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against His creed*

— Alfred Lord Tennyson

From physicists, we learn about “entropy,” a supposed force of Nature “out there” in the universe. This cosmic abstraction is out to get you. It is said to destroy everything you love by dissolving “order” into “disorder.” Entropy is believed by many scientists to be real. Not only real but all-powerful and inescapable. When students of physics learn about the Second Law of Thermodynamics, they learn about this force, and they tend to resign themselves to the “wise” realization that joy is fleeting and sorrow eternal. That absolutely everything they hold on to is destined to crumble away. It might never occur to them that they are participating in just one way of seeing the universe — and a rather clingy and fatalistic way of seeing it, at that.

From modern medicine, we learn that the world outside of our bodies is a hostile place. Your pale, sickly dermatologist warns you about the dangers of sunlight. He makes you slather your skin with industrial chemicals. Either that or he cautions you to stay “safely” indoors. But that won't save you, will it? Even inside your home, the narrative of your existence is filled with monsters. You are surrounded on all sides by legions of scary germs. Or so your family doctor seems to tell you as she treats your slightest illness with antibiotics, as though your health were a war between the insides of your body and an outside world invading you with death and decay. It might seldom occur to us that we can view health in other ways. For example, as a harmonious communication between our nervous systems and the bacteria in the environment. Yes, such cooperation actually does occur.

Our homes have become veritable fortresses against pollen, wind, and rain. Against normal fluctuations in temperature and lighting. Against the very conditions in which our prehistoric ancestors were intimately immersed. Like spoiled children, our overly sheltered bodies become fussy and sickly. We are stricken with allergies (hyper-defensive immune systems) or various, inexplicable forms of anxiety (low tolerance to environmental stressors). To stay “healthy,” we retreat further and further into our protective, artificial environments. We flee from heat and cold. From the very world itself, and we peer fearfully out the window at “harsh” sunlight and “dangerous”

lightning. We make generous offerings to the gods of technology, who only respond by further separating us from Nature with a sheet of UV-resistant, hurricane-proof glass.

Worst of all, we know that all of these efforts to protect ourselves constitute a losing battle. As the war between mankind and Mother Nature wages, we silently realize that our universal Mother is more powerful than all of our technological defenses. We know she will eventually overwhelm us, reclaim us, and turn us back into mulch. Her beauty is always accompanied by an “inexplicable” dread, a lurking anxiety that whispers to us that all the luxuries of our state-of-the-art civilization are powerless to save us.

Rest assured, this is *not* how our prehistoric ancestors saw the world.

But how do I know this? Because I know that it's possible for you to reboot your body and restore primal consciousness. It's possible for you to slough off your conditioning and unlearn what you have been taught about Nature and the Universe. To unlearn the lies we have been told. Once we unshackle ourselves from the horror story that our parents, teachers, and journalists have drilled into our heads, we can turn toward forest, sky, and ocean once again and simply look at them, see them as they really are. There are other perspectives available to us, other than that of the anxious mortal. I'm confident that anyone who re-learns how to do this will conclude that there is a much richer experience of the world available to us than “danger at every turn.”

Yes, I am proposing that, right now, you are unable to see the world the way our prehistoric ancestors did. You might want to, and you might try to, but you have been domesticated, just like me, to see it in terms of *suffering*. As a place of endless lack. Endless danger. Threats to your home. Threats to your food supply. Your status. Or of course, your money. This suffering is so insidious that you don't even notice how much we are all driven by it. If you don't agree with me on this, just bear with this article for a few more minutes because what I'm saying is that your current ideas about happiness may very well pale in comparison to the kind of joy that is really possible for you out there in the forests and oceans under the sky. It's possible that you have never really touched bliss. As some Buddhists are fond of saying, the kind of happiness you currently experience is still just suffering in comparison to the joy that is really possible.

One explanation for our modern-day lack of joy is fairly obvious. Happiness is relative — that is, it is not really happiness at all! Just a momentary easing up of civilization's anxiety. You get an unexpected bonus at work. You are “so happy” because now you'll be able to afford that expensive repair to your car. Is that happiness? Or simply relief from worry? And if that's not really happiness, then what is?

The kind of happiness that we settle for is not enough. Not the real thing. To really “get there,” we must understand the scary truth: that we exist in a state of compromise. The truth is that we are afraid of getting blissed-out, and we keep our joy at arms length, staying constantly on guard against who and what we truly are, refusing to let down our guard and let it in.

Why on Earth would we do such a thing? Well, the experience of bliss, from the perspective of the civilized ego, is quite a monster. In truth, most of us are terrified of it. To become truly happy, you have to face death. You have to *not care* whether you live or die.

This is all true because the Mother of both life and death, the natural world, is not really who we think she is. She is not lurking “out there.” She is not just a monster that needs to be kept at the point of a sword. *She is actually pure joy, and civilization has been unwittingly keeping that joy at bay for thousands of years.*

How We Lost Our Magical Vision

But what does this have to do with magic? Or the Grail for that matter? Well, the natural world is actually quite magical. It is very much alive and filled with palpable mysteries: spirits, gods, and other fathomless powers that well up from an incomprehensible shamanistic underworld. It is filled to the brim with an animating life force, and we ourselves are constantly overflowing with spirit powers that we have been told are not real.

Not every realization is a construct. Our ancestors did not fabricate their beliefs in spirits and gods in an attempt to feel better about a dangerous world “out there.” Not initially, anyway. Magic was never “invented” as a feelgood storyline to create meaning in a “meaningless” world. Spirits and gods simply are. And always have been. Our problem as domesticated humans is that we have fallen into an anxious, adversarial relationship with an imaginary “physical world out there,” and that fantasy of an

externalized existence chronically cuts us off from the joy of Nature. It blinds us to the immanent presence of the spirit world within her. Within us. The Earth has always been filled up with magic, but we have lost the ability to see it. And the practice of magic, as a discipline, is a means of getting that vision back.

We are lived by powers we pretend to understand.

— W.H. Auden

How did we lose that vision? There are multiple reasons. Poor diet, chronic inflammation, calcification of the hippocampus and pineal gland, the glorification of stress, poor breathing, light pollution and hormonal dysregulation, diminished mitochondrial function, cultural conditioning, etc. *Forbidden Realms* has been discussing some of these factors in depth.

At the most fundamental biological level, however, the source of your suffering is not really your fault. It lies in the manner in which we evolved. Sure, our world leaders and advertisers take advantage of us because of this, but *they* are not really to blame either. We are all in this together.

From the primeval ooze of the first forms of life to our smartphone-addicted brains today, the way our nervous system has developed has set the stage for the most catastrophic form of ignorance imaginable. And almost all of us have fallen for it. Something happened to us in our evolutionary development that cut us off from the truth about the world.

This is where the story of “the Fall” comes from. The myth of the Fall of Man, of being cast out of the Garden of Eden, offers us powerful and useful clues to the cause of all suffering. At the end of this article, I offer a brief exercise that helps you see your own “fallen” state directly. The main thing for you to realize right now is this:

It is your own predatory nervous system that keeps you in a fallen, unenlightened state.

Monsters in the Deep

When Earth was young, death was a non-issue. The first lifeforms were, in some respects, immortal. They did not reproduce sexually. They increased their numbers through cell-division, so they would simply live on and on, absorbing nutrients from

seawater and reproducing endlessly (unless, of course, they were starved of those nutrients. Or perhaps crushed to death in a rock slide).

These were our ancestors. They probably started out rooted in place, adhering to rocks in the water, as though they had spontaneously generated from the very rock itself. Their connection to the Earth and the environment was absolute, and they lived out their tiny and potentially limitless lives without a care in the world. Many are still alive today after billions of years. Some are still virtually identical to the way they existed countless eons ago. And some have evolved into perplexingly complicated forms. You and me, for instance.

These simple creatures were inherently enlightened. They didn't need to practice fasting, meditation, and ritual. They were already one with the universe. They did not have nervous systems, as yet, so they were not yet capable of looking at the universe as though it were something alien and outside of themselves. They lived and died, yes of course, but they were not yet capable of worrying about living or dying like we are today.

Primordial Life

Natural selection drove the evolution of these creatures, and it is natural selection that eventually produced you and me. And curiously, it is natural selection that we can blame for producing our current state of suffering and ignorance. This is an important point because it proposes that your suffering is not really “all your fault.” Quite the contrary to the guilt that our religions and civil authorities try to impose upon us—our suffering does not result solely from our moral failings. It is more a byproduct of our biological evolution. Even more so, it has become the primary driver of human evolution. Somehow, we have come to rely on suffering to survive, and that poses a bit of a problem for us today.

Our earliest, single-celled ancestors did not actively hunt for nutrients, warmth, and sunlight. They simply took for granted that these life-sustaining forces would always be there. And of course, such forces were not always available. So naturally, any form of life that developed the ability to sense and chase after these “things” “outside” of itself would have a better chance of surviving and, as a result, of becoming more numerous. And of course, that’s what happened. They evolved. Our single-celled ancestors turned into monsters.

Growing Mouths, Tails, and Eyes

They developed mouths and tails, and rudimentary eyes. And a nervous system to coordinate the diverging parts of their bodies. These evolving creatures could now sense food sources in the environment. They could swim toward them. Ingest them. They could sense life-sustaining sunlight and migrate to locations that allowed them to better absorb it. They could escape from conditions that were too hot or too cold. And yes, they could kill each other for food. The evolving nervous system — and its ability to sense prey and go hunting for it, not to mention its ability to sense predators and flee from them — is what began the evolution of a new predator-driven existence. The same kind of nervous system we have today. It is also what set the stage for the creation of unenlightened beings. Becoming more and more efficient hunting and killing machines is what creates the basis for ignorance and suffering. Yes, it is your desire for food and your fear of threats in your environment that form the basis of your unhappiness. Desire and fear haunt you because we have evolved into a state of being that relies on desire and fear as the primary drivers of survival.

Primordial Monster

The True Cause of Suffering: The Gap

Now we come to the most simple of all possible explanations for the mystery of suffering. It is so simple that it is hard to understand. And hard to believe, unless you really look at the world and catch your nervous system in the act of creating suffering out of it.

First of all, let's get the idea of sin out of the way. Try not to read the story of our evolution as a morality tale. It is not the "evil" of meat-eating or "murder" that has caused us to enter our fallen state. It is something much more fundamental than that, and it involves the manner in which the predatory nervous system sees the world.

Human beings are the evolutionary heirs of the primordial predators and prey of the deep ocean. Our nervous systems have become much more sophisticated now, of course, but our brains and spines still function in the same basic way. We are aware of "the environment." We still single-out our "prey." We still sense "predators" around us. We negotiate our way through the world by sorting out these "things" in the environment and reacting to them. Our brains create objects from our sensory input. Some objects it labels as good and some as bad. This is the key point. *Your ability to perceive objects, or "things," is what creates your suffering.*

Why? Because objects do not really exist. At least not in the way we think they do.

An example may help show how this works. An apple farmer is working in his orchard. His blood sugar has dropped. He begins to get hungry. His brain begins to undergo the stress response. It shuts down higher reasoning functions and simplifies the world around him. The perception of the farmer's separation from his environment becomes stronger. More black and white. The orchard around him becomes increasingly distant, and his mind begins chopping it into pieces singling out bits of the immediate environment, compulsively looking for something that might contain carbohydrates. There must be some "thing" useful in the sea of matter in the immediate vicinity, something it can draw towards its mouth. In the process of the hunt, the brain creates a phantom world of isolated objects, some of which are labeled desirable and some of which are labeled undesirable. The farmer buys into this illusory world of good and

bad objects. His stereoscopic, predatory eyes close in upon a succulent red “apple” hanging from a nearby tree.

This apple is not really just an apple. It is a momentary manifestation of sunlight, air, water, and soil. More than that, it is an evanescent child of cosmic beauty erupting from hidden depths, from the life force deep in the heart of the universe. Physically, the apple is completely rooted to the Earth, and there is no actual dividing line between it and Nature. The heat of the Sun, the minerals and bacteria in the soil, the tree sap, the carbon dioxide in the wind — all these things are absolutely fused together upon it and within it. There is no boundary between its “separate” ingredients, except for the fake boundaries created by our crafty brains. These raw elements appear to flow together on the surface of a deep, mysterious river of time, swirling momentarily into a temporary whirlpool of a phenomenon: this image of red ripeness. The apple’s “ingredients” are not really ingredients at all. More like superficial costumes in a cosmic play, the true substance of which remains invisible to our brains.

But that’s not what the farmer sees. His desire has created an imaginary world of predators and prey. This imaginary world is simplified and useful to him, of course. That’s why his brain has evolved the ability to create it. It helps him see the apple as merely food. The farmer’s body then uses two propulsion units — his legs — to reposition itself closer to its perceived prey. The brain uses the farmer’s hand to reach forward and pluck the “apple” from the tree. The farmer then retreats to the shade of a larger tree to eat his prize in peace.

In order to accomplish the above feat, the farmer’s brain had to isolate the apple to distinguish it from other “things” like tree bark, leaves, and wheelbarrows. Our human nervous system is particularly good at doing this — but there is a problem. We have almost completely fallen for its ability to do so. The farmer fails to see that the apple is a microcosm of the entire universe. His nervous system has created an imaginary thought bubble around it, which he ignorantly labels “just an apple.”

What would the world look like if we could see it without turning everything around us into mere objects. It would be quite different! It would not be an “it” at all, but rather, we would be absolutely embedded in the world around us. The world would be us, as much as our bodies would be the world. This is our true state. Fused to all that exists. Completely whole. One with everything. And not just with the earth, air, water, and fire

around us but with the mysterious fabric of space itself, not to mention with the flow of time and the dimensions of existence that lie hidden within all of it. They are not “out there somewhere,” waiting to be discovered or conquered. They are right here, right now.

But what does this cosmic vision have to do with suffering? How could seeing that “all is one” be of any use to you? In essence, it shows you that suffering is not real because there is no space that is capable of separating “things.” There is no emptiness anywhere in the universe. No gap between you and your heart’s desire. No gap between you and the apple. No gap between you and the sexiest lover of your dreams. The gap is an illusion of lack, an illusion of “I’m not good enough yet,” created for the purpose of motivating you to feed and breed and survive.

Similarly, the distance between you and your greatest fear is also an illusion, and the most frightening monster you’ve ever seen is not really “out there.” It is a part of you, just as you are a part of it. The most despicable coward, the most chilling psychopath, and the most glorified hero — all these characters are part of you. You are not above them or beneath them. There is no high point and no low point that is higher or lower than any point within yourself.

This vision of the universe, freed from the nervous system’s ability to create separate categories and separate objects, is the one true bliss. It is a vision of immortality and indestructibility. And since it does not fill your stomach with food or get you away from your monsters, it is the last thing on Earth that you want. And ironically, it is the only kind of vision that can truly dispel fear and desire to produce bliss.

An Antidote to Civilization’s Sickness

“Life is suffering,” said the Buddha over 2,500 years ago, giving us the first of his Four Noble Truths. The Buddha was aware that mankind’s “sane” and civilized mindset was mistaken — that somewhere in the process of our domestication, we started looking upon the universe as a dreadful place. A place filled with a strange otherness. This suffering-laden mindset sees itself as an alien in a strange environment—a place that is both a formidable adversary and a treacherous slave. Or worse yet, modernity today tends to see the whole world as a lifeless field of debris teeming with heartless physical laws that are ultimately stacked against us. What we fail to see is that the vast universe is alive, and that she is our nurturing Mother.

Here's some good news: the nervous system we find ourselves with today is not inherently sick. Not inherently stuck in a predator-driven existence. It does have access to other modes of seeing, even though our safety-obsessed parents, educators, and leaders would have us believe otherwise.

The Buddha taught that there is an antidote to our psychological sickness. Almost all mystics teach this. The cure involves unlearning what we have learned. It involves seeing without judging. Systematically undoing what our domestication has done to us. Looking at the world with fresh eyes. Primal eyes. In other words, looking at the world without creating separated, isolated objects out of it. When we can do this, the universe once again becomes a goddess. Or a vast organism in which we are not invaders that must survive through strategy and plunder, but in which we operate as intimately cherished parts. And by "parts," I don't mean separate pieces of a machine. Rather, we are extensions of our universal Mother, and the dividing line that supposedly exists between us and Nature is nowhere to be found.

“You and the land are one.”

The Grail

The Buddha is not the only one to have proposed an antidote to suffering. One of the most profound symbols for this mysterious cure comes down to us not from Eastern mysticism but from the West. It is the legend of the Holy Grail. The mythic image of the Grail, the Grail as a physical object, helps us appreciate the true nature of the Buddha's cure as a functional and meaningful thing. It condenses the cure for humanity's predicament into an object. Otherwise, we run the risk of interpreting the Buddha's teachings as a pure mental abstraction. As though a mere concept held in the mind might save us.

You probably already have in inkling of what the Grail is — as in the cup that catches the mythical Christ's blood as he hangs on the cross. And the cup that he uses at the Last Supper to magically transform wine into blood. That's just one manifestation of this fictional object, for the legend of the Grail is far older than Christian myth. It is commonly a symbol of a powerful counter-cultural force. It is the sacred feminine. It often gets obfuscated by vague, vaporous notions of “salvation” or as the attainment of the “Holy Spirit.” We put it on a pedestal, as though it were something to be held on high, beyond human reach. The Grail represents immortality. Most importantly, it is a symbol of something that mankind has lost.

The Grail Kept at a Distance

The commonly known golden cup of the Christian sacrament has been borrowed from older pagan traditions, and in those traditions, the Grail has taken other forms. A cauldron, for instance. A woman's womb. A sacred well. And even a stone. Yes, there really is a secret of the Grail, and more interestingly, the Grail cup of the Christians and the Philosophers' Stone of medieval alchemists are really one and the same thing.

But if our ability to create objects inserts a gap between us and our true happiness, if the ability to objectify Nature causes misery, how can the adoration of a physical object, the Grail, offer us a cure to suffering? Why would drinking from a “magic cup” fill the emptiness in your soul? Because the Grail, obviously, is more than just a magic

cup. The Grail is the ultimate in occult knowledge. It is the deepest of all the forbidden realms, for it holds a secret so destructive that we feel compelled to keep it at a distance, to put it up high on a pedestal — not just because we adore it, but to keep it from destroying us! You see, the Grail is the ultimate fetish.

fetish: an object regarded with awe as being the embodiment or habitation of a potent spirit or as having magical potency

The Grail as the Universe Itself

The Grail as a “Thing”

Here we come to the most difficult concept of the Grail. It is a fetish in the truly Freudian sense. Freud saw a fetish, such as a garter, as an attempt to objectify and control a dangerous feminine force in sexuality. The realization that all humans come forth from the vagina simultaneously makes a woman's womb a symbol of creation. And also a symbol of destruction. If passing through the womb into this world creates us, then returning back into it will destroy us. Going back into the womb means our destruction.

When we come into the world through our mothers, we enter a body that has a nervous system which sees itself as distinct from the universe. When we die, that distinction dissolves, and we return back to the universe. You can probably see where I'm going with this. We don't need to literally die to become one with the universe. We can dissolve the distinction between ourselves and "it" while still breathing. We can learn how to turn off our nervous system's ability to create the gap between us and all that exists.

Yes, suffering has an off switch.

The Grail as a fetish offers us the perfect opportunity to do this. The very act of objectifying happiness into an object "out there" and putting it on high, putting it on a pedestal just out of reach — that very scenario is an illustration of our ability to create a gap between ourselves and our heart's desire. It is the problem itself. This means that a vision of the Holy Grail is not necessarily an image of enlightenment. It is rather a vision of the problem. And that's the beauty of it, for a vision of the Grail shows us what we must do to reverse our predicament.

The ultimate truth of reality is that, whether we are alive or dead, there is no distinction between self and universe. Realizing this “destroys” us, for to have no boundaries means that we have no sense of self. To protect ourselves from this realization, from a return to “non-existence,” we tie up that realization into an object. And by means of that objectification, we are able to keep our realization of oneness at bay. The ultimate in fulfillment can be kept at a distance, sequestered into a forbidden zone in which our enlightenment becomes taboo. The Grail gets sequestered into a Holy of Holies deep inside the mind, into a place too pure to touch.

The Arc of the Covenant is a similar such fetish. The Christian cross is another, secretly symbolizing a reunion with the Mother. For what is the cross but a phallic shaft penetrating into the depth of the sacred. The cross, pinned up high on the wall and gazed at from afar, keeps our doom at bay.

Have you ever wondered why a trophy often takes the form of a cup, much like the Grail? It symbolizes our ability to attain the ultimate: the womb of creation. It also symbolizes our power *over* that experience. Victory. Power over death. The ability to keep our own annihilation at bay. To sideline it and put it up on a shelf.

The Grail is a vessel, and an enclosure. As such, it represents the entire universe itself. To win a trophy symbolizes the ultimate — a reunion with the universe. The ability to dive into the cup and unite with the substance of the world itself. To restore Eden.

So...our adoration of the Grail, our holding it on high, prolongs our fallen state. That is the true nature of humanity's sickness. Our unenlightenment. We have fetishized the whole universe! To our predatory nervous system, the universe exists "over there," and we exist "over here." We are cast out of the Garden. Fallen out with the world itself. Our ability to objectify the entire universe has created a gap between us and the substance of reality itself. And in our fallen state, we stupidly try to claim power over that substance, as though we are somehow capable of rising above it and dominating it to survive. Nothing could be more of a delusion than that.

And if this is all true, the antidote to our situation becomes clear: Drink from the Grail!

The Sword Bridge Represents the Fear by which We Keep the Grail at Bay

Rejoining the World

Do it now. Imagine yourself sitting in the congregation of a holy temple or church. You are seated before the Holy of Holies. In the East, is the sacred space that contains the ultimate forbidden object. It may simply be the cross above a Christian altar. Or the Ark of the Covenant hidden behind a purple curtain. Or the Holy Grail floating there, on high, in a cloud.

See that forbidden object before you now. It is the embodiment of the entire universe. All extremes — high and low, hot and cold, light and dark, chaos and order — are bound within it. Its contours represent the gate through which we passed when we were cut off from the whole, when our brains created this fake sense of a self trapped in human skin. Passing into the object will remove your isolation, loneliness, and suffering. It is not "holiness" you seek but *wholeness*.

Now is the time for your ultimate act of defiance. Ignore what your parents, teachers, and leaders have taught you about propriety. The opportunity to undo humanity's curse is now upon you: the purple curtain parts, the cross descends within human reach, or the Grail comes to rest upon the altar. Get up and move toward it. Reach out and touch

the sacred object! Open it. Or drink from it. Or plunge into it. Feel the substance of your body merge with the substance of the universe beyond the gateway of that object. Disappear into the all.

This ritual action of negating the duality of subject and object — this is what will restore your magical vision. Curiously, it is the very thing that a Zen monk seeks when he sits in meditation, staring at a wall, or at the sand in his rock garden. He is deliberately confronting something — not the stones in the wall or the sand but the me-versus-the-universe scenario generated by his brain. He is catching his mind in the act of creating a gap between self and world. If he stares long enough, he may notice what is happening, and the gap will be destroyed. Humanity's curse will be lifted.

But how is this ultimate in unification, our reunion with the all, a magical experience? How does it translate into incantations and spooky invocations of spirits from the netherworld? To understand that, we will have to discuss the contents of the Grail itself. What's inside? What is the nature of its mysterious fluid — and why have I told you that the “Stone” of the Philosophers is the same thing as the “water” contained in the Grail? In the next article, we will explore this mysterious substance.

Stay tuned.

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